

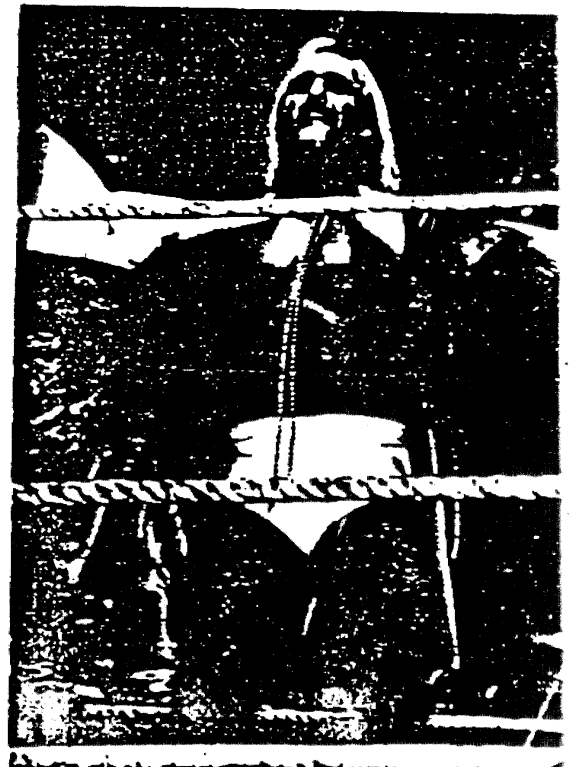
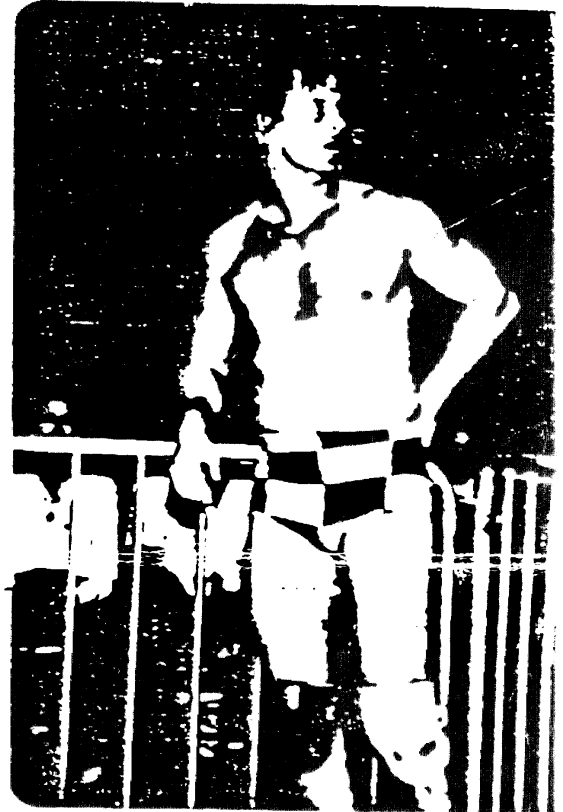
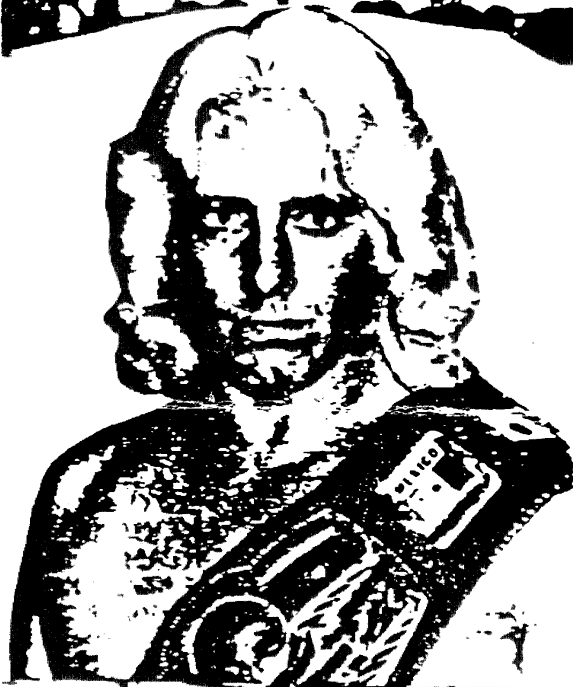
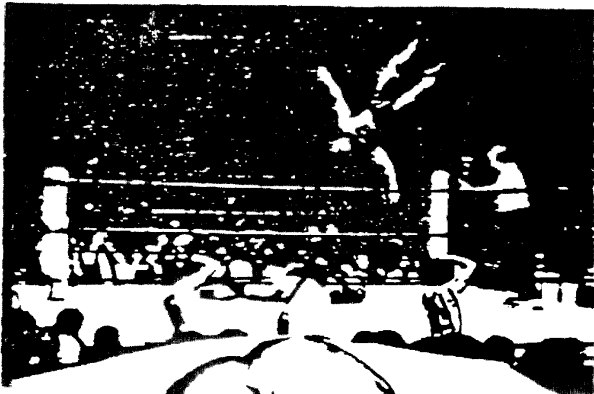
INSIDE:

AWARDS AND RATINGS

1982 IN REVIEW

PROFILES OF THE SUPERSTARS

AND MUCH MORE



WRESTLING OBSERVOR. We're all very excited from this and in trying to put together what we hope will be the most interesting reading to be found anywhere on the great sport of professional wrestling.

From 1972-1974 I published a bulletin, first entitled California Wrestling Report and later, the International Wrestling Gazette. What's amazing to me is the number of readers from the old bulletin, who have pre-ordered this yearbook. The old Wrestling Gazette was a 30-40 page monthly news/results type bulletin. In doing the Observer, the goal is to present something unique and different.

Starting next month, this magazine will be filled with news reports from around the globe, and plenty of editorial reaction to the events. We will not be a results bulletin, because in my opinion there are a number of fine results bulletins on the market. Depending on space limitations, we will, at most, have one page devoted to results.

Because we will have many opinion pieces, we encourage those with differing views. Our editorial policy is to treat professional wrestling exactly how it deserves. When a promotion goes "off the deep end," we'll say so. And when a promotion does something good, we'll say so also. We won't be apologists for the sport, but I'm sure all the regular contributors will share my view that sport or not, pro wrestling is intriguing, addictive and in a sense, is the true king of sports.

THE OBSERVER AWARDS

The awards and ratings listed in this bulletin and the results of the most comprehensive poll we've ever been involved in. In November 50 ballots were sent out to who I consider the leading expert fans of the sport.

Ballots were sent to the publishers of all the leading wrestling bulletins, editors and writers of the national magazines, leading correspondents of the best bulletins, and a group probably the most knowledgeable of the true skills of the wrestlers.

The response has been tremendous. We have received 36 awards ballots and 32 sets of ratings. Every major geographical region was represented, plus we received a half dozen ballots from overseas.

While no awards or ratings are fool-proof, my biased view is these are the best to be found anywhere. If one considers that in college football, the national champion is chosen by fewer pollsters than we had, and that the football coaches and writers perhaps saw only half the teams they rated, while our pollsters saw from 80 percent to all the wrestlers they rated, you can understand my view.

The top five wrestlers are listed in all the "Category A" awards. Those who received mention on four or more ballots but didn't make the top five point totals, receive honorable mention. In Category A, the balloters selected a first, second and third pick and they received 5-3-2 in the point standings. First place votes are listed in parenthesis.

"Category B" awards were voted on with just a first place vote. The points are the number of first place votes received.

In "Category C," the ratings, each balloter was asked to select a top 50, in order. The points were given 50 for first, to one for number 50. The final result is most interesting because many indicated they voted strictly on ability, with little consideration to win/loss record, others voted only on record, success and reputation. I will assume that most voted on a little of each, but how much weight results carried vs. ability differs likely in all 32 ballots.

From my side, two categories created lots of confusion. For best finishing hold, many responded figure four leglock, or suplex--but what was wanted was the individual who executes the most outstanding finisher. The category "Most likely to make it big in '83" saw men like Jimmy Snuka, Ted DiBiase and the like receive considerable mention. Actually this category was designed for those who aren't big names now, but who will be in the future. Because of that confusion, that category has been eliminated. For the record, Matt Borne was the winner with Brad Rheingans, Curt Hennig and Oregon rookie Billy Jack gaining considerable mention.

(cont. on Page 2)

who supply us with news/results reports, regular contributors in other ways, or those with whom I currently trade wrestling videotapes with, the price will be 75¢ per issue--which is just to cover postage and part of the printing costs.

The first regular issue of the WRESTLING OBSERVOR, which will be mailed out on February 20th, will contain as up-to-date news as you'll find anywhere, at least two guest editorials, a lengthy feature on Cable TV and its effect on pro wrestling, hopefully some interesting letters, and some regular features.

The regular features will be "Circuit In-Depth," in which we will review two major circuits each month. The reviews will be in-depth and very controversial. We'll call them as we see them, and in many cases that may not be too good. We'll start next month with two very interesting and controversial circuits, Vince McMahon's World Wrestling Federation, and its Japanese outpost run by Hisashi Shinma and Antonio Inoki. In addition we'll have an interesting ratings feature, in which we'll take some outlandish categories and rate wrestlers in those categories. All outside ballots are encouraged. Next month we will rate the top 15 junior heavyweights and wrestling's ten best physiques.

Another category which I would like to make a regular feature in the "Question of the Month." We will attempt it next month and see if we get enough response to warrant making it monthly. The first question of the month is, "What is the best wrestling match you ever saw?" Simple, isn't it.

All news reports, and other contributions are due at the mailing address by February 15th.

This column, which will be limited to one page in the future, will be my personal editorial of the month. And until next month. So long from Silicon Valley.

NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE

World's hwt - 1. Ric Flair
World's tag team - 1. Ole Anderson & Stan Hansen; 2. Sgt. Slaughter & Don Kernodle
United States - 1. Sgt. Slaughter; 2. Wahoo McDaniel; 3. Slaughter; 4. McDaniel; 5. Greg Valentine
Mid Atlantic - 1. Roddy Piper; 2. Jack Brisco; 3. Piper; 4. Brisco; 5. Paul Jones; 6. Brisco
Mid Atlantic TV - 1. Ivan Koloff; 2. Jimmy Valiant; 3. Jos LeDuc; 4. Leroy Brown; 5. Mike Rotundo
Mid Atlantic tag - 1. Jay Youngblood & Johnny Weaver; 2. Pvt. Jim Nelson & Pvt. Don Kernodle; 3. Porkchop Cash & King Parsons; 4. Privates; 5. Ricky Steamboat & Jay Youngblood
(Note: title no longer in existence)
National - 1. The Superstar; 2. Tommy Rich; 3. Ron Bass; 4. Rich; 5. Buzz Sawyer; 6. Paul Orndorff; 7. Super Destroyer; 8. Orndorff; 9. Superstar; 10. Orndorff
National tag - 1. Bob & Brad Armstrong; 2. Superstar & Super Destroyer; 3. John Studd & Super Destroyer; 4. Michael Hayes & Terry Gordy; 5. The Samoans
Southern - 1. David von Erich; 2. Derek Draper; 3. Sweet Brown Sugar; 4. Jim Garvin; 5. Dusty Rhodes; 6. Kevin Sullivan; 7. Barry Windham
Florida - 1. The Spoiler; 2. Mr. Wrestling #2; 3. J.J. Dillon; 4. Wrestling #2; 5. Jim Garvin; 6. Brian Blair; 7. Kevin Sullivan
North American/Global tag - 1. Jack & Jerry Brisco; 2. Dory & Terry Funk; 3. Briscos; 4. Dory Funk & David von Erich; 5. Bruce Reed & Sweet Brown Sugar; 6. Jim Garvin & John Studd; 7. Barry Windham & Ron Bass
Missouri - 1. Dick the Bruiser; 2. Harley Race
American - 1. Buggy McGraw; 2. Kerry von Erich; 3. King Kong Bundy; 4. Fritz von Erich; 5. Bundy; 6. Kevin von Erich
Texas - 1. Al Madril; 2. Bill Irwin; 3. David von Erich
American tag - 1. King Kong Bundy & Buggy McGraw; 2. Kerry & Kevin von Erich; 3. Bundy & Bill Irwin; 4. Michael Hayes & Terry Gordy
Pacific Federation - 1. Giant Baba; 2. Stan Hansen; 3. Baba; 4. Harley Race

World's tag team - 1. Les Thornton;
2. Tiger Mask

WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION

WWF - 1. Bob Backlund
Intercontinental - 1. Pedro Morales
World's tag - 1. Mr. Fuji & Mr. Saito; 2. Jay & Jules Strongbow; 3. Fuji & Saito; 4. Strongbaws
WWF jr. hwt - 1. Tiger Mask; 2. Black Tiger; 3. Tiger Mask
International - 1. Tony Parisi; 2. Gino Brito; 3. Tatsumi Fujinami (funny story here)
Universal - 1. El Canek; 2. Riki Chosyu; 3. Canek
World's lightweight - 1. Pero Aguayo; 2. El Gran Hamada; 3. Aguayo

AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION

World's - 1. Nick Bockwinkel; 2. Otto Wanz; 3. Bockwinkel
World's tag team - 1. Greg Gagne & Jim Brunzell
Southwest - 1. Dick Slater; 2. Mongolian Stomper; 3. Slater
Southwest tag - 1. Gino Hernandez & Tully Blanchard; 2. Rick Morton & Ken Lucas; 3. Blanchard & Hernandez; 4. Morton & Lucas; 5. Hernandez & Blanchard; 6. Dick Slater & Bob Sweetan; 7. Lucas & Morton

MID SOUTH WRESTLING

North American - 1. Ted DiBiase; 2. Bob Roop; 3. Junkyard Dog; 4. DiBiase
Louisiana - 1. Great Kabuki; 2. Junkyard Dog; 3. Killer Khan; 4. Mike Sharpe; 5. Jim Duggan
Mississippi - 1. Bob Orton; 2. Mr. Olympia; 3. Killer Khan; 4. Olympia
Mid South tag - 1. Junkyard Dog & Dick Murdoch; 2. Samoans; 3. Dog & Mike George; 4. Samoans; 5. Dog & Mr. Olympia; 6. Ted DiBiase & Matt Borne

PACIFIC NORTHWEST (N.W.A.)

Northwest - 1. Brent Sawyer; 2. Rick Oliver; Sawyer; 4. Oliver; 5. Sawyer; 6. Sheik Ali Hassan
Northwest tag - 1. Rocky Johnson & King Parsons; 2. Oliver & Matt Borne; 3. Larry & Curt Hennig; 4. Oliver & Borne; 5. Sawyer & Johnson; 6. Rose & Oliver; 7. Sawyer & Steve Pardee; 8. Oliver & The Assassin;

7. Nick Bockwinkel.....1206
8. Nick Bockwinkel.....1131
9. Roddy Piper.....1083
10. Stan Hansen.....1077
11. Paul Orndorff.....1051
12. The Superstar.....1049
13. Dory Funk.....1044
14. Andre the Giant.....1021
15. Dusty Rhodes.....1005
16. Jack Brisco.....927
17. Don Muraco.....877
18. Sgt. Slaughter.....872
19. Antonio Inoki.....858
20. Terry Funk.....835
21. Jumbo Tsuruta.....801
22. Tiger Mask.....762
23. Ricky Steamboat.....726
24. Ken Patera.....720
25. Junkyard Dog.....681
26. Buzz Sawyer.....674
27. Bruce Reed.....652
28. Dick Slater.....606
29. Bob Orton.....582
30. Jerry Lawler.....562
31. Adrian Adonis.....551
32. Otto Wanz.....545
33. Dick Murdoch.....526
34. David von Erich.....504
35. Tatsumi Fujinami.....489
36. Killer Khan.....457
37. Greg Valentine.....456
38. Tommy Rich.....455
39. Ivan Koloff.....409
40. Mil Mascaras.....408
41. Wahoo McDaniel.....404
42. Super Destroyer.....328
43. Rick Martel.....304
44. Kerry von Erich.....300
45. Giant Baba.....272
46. Pedro Morales.....261
47. Dynamite Kid.....260
48. Tony Atlas.....252
49. Jerry Blackwell.....221
50. Abdullah the Butcher.....207
Great Kabuki.....207
52. Steve Keirn.....203
53. Jim Brunzell.....195
54. Iron Sheik.....180
55. Kevin von Erich.....182
56. Tito Santana.....181
57. Buddy Rose.....179
58. Rocky Johnson.....164
59. Ole Anderson.....156
60. Ron Bass.....151
61. Billy Robinson.....144
62. Paul Jones.....141
63. Jay Youngblood.....135
64. Dos Caras.....129
Manny Fernandez.....129
66. Jim Garvin.....126
67. Gino Hernandez.....119
Chavo Guerrero.....119
69. Blackjack Mulligan.....117
70. Jos LeDuc.....108
71. Superstar Graham.....106
72. David Schultz.....102
73. Larry Zbyszko.....100
74. Randy Savage.....99
75. Bruno Sammartino Jr.....97

MOST CHARISMATIC WRESTLER

1. RIC FLAIR (6).....47
 - DUSTY RHODES (8).....47
 3. Roddy Piper (4).....43
 4. Jimmy Snuka (6).....42
 5. Hulk Hogan (6).....37
- Honorable Mention - Tommy Rich,
Junkyard Dog, Michael Hayes,
Jerry Lawler

MOST OVERRATED WRESTLER

1. PEDRO MORALES (3).....48
 2. Bob Backlund (6).....42
 3. Tommy Rich (3).....24
 4. Giant Baba (4).....22
 5. Dusty Rhodes (3).....20
- Honorable Mention - Ivan Putski,
Kerry von Erich

MOST UNDERRATED WRESTLER

1. ADRIAN ADONIS (5).....30
 2. Dynamite Kid (4).....22
 3. Bob Orton (1).....17
 4. Larry Zbyszko (3).....15
 - Bruce Reed (3).....15
 - Johnny Rodz (3).....15
 - Dos Caras (3).....15
- Honorable Mention - Ron Fuller,
Dick Slater, Chic Donovan, Manny
Fernandez, Buzz Sawyer, Animal
Hamaguchi

C A T E G O R Y B

All awards based on first
place votes received

MATCH OF THE YEAR

1. FLAIR vs BACKLUND
(7-4 Atlanta)..7
 - TIGER MASK vs DYNAMITE KID
(8-5 Tokyo)....7
 3. Backlund vs Shuka
(cage New York)5
- Honorable Mention - Backlund vs
Adonis (1-30 MSG), Buddy Rose vs
David Schultz (chain match Portland),
Flair vs Steamboat (2-7 Greensboro),
Flair vs Hansen (10-3 Atlanta)

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

1. STEVE WILLIAMS.....10
2. Mike Rotundo.....6

HARDEST WORKER IN THE RING

1. RIC FLAIR.....6
- TIGER MASK.....6
3. Dynamite Kid.....3

BIGGEST SHOCK OF 1982

1. OTTO WANZ WINS AWA BELT..16
2. DiBiase turns villain.....8
3. Jody Arnold pins Superstar
Graham in Phoenix.....3

1. BACKLUND KEEPING WWF BELT...9

2. Louisville Battle Royal with
four girls involved.....5
3. Backlund beating Snuka.....3
- Lawler-Andy Kaufman incident..3
- Snuka-Albano incident.....3

PREVIOUS WINNERS OF WRESTLING OBSERVOR AWARDS

Wrestler of the year: 1980 - Harley
Race; 1981 - Ric Flair
Best hero of the year: 1980 - Dusty
Rhodes; 1981 - Tommy Rich
Best villain of the year: 1980 - Larry
Zbyszko; 1981 - Don Muraco
Feud of the year: 1980 - Bruno Sammartino
vs. Larry Zbyszko; 1981 - Andre
the Giant vs. Killer Khan
Tag team of the year: 1980 - Freebirds;
1981 - Terry Gordy & Jimmy Snuka
Most Improved Wrestler: 1980 - Larry
Zbyszko; 1981 - Adrian Adonis
Best Finishing maneuver: 1981 - Jimmy
Snuka's superfly splash
Most Impressive: 1980 - Ken Patera;
1981 - Don Muraco
Most Washed up: 1980 - Baron Scicluna;
1981 - Peter Maivia (that sure
looks bad now!)
Most Obnoxious: 1981 - Gene LeBelle
Best Brawler: 1980 - Bruiser Brody;
1981 - Brody (time to retire the award)
Best Scientific: 1980 - Bob Backlund;
1981 - Ted DiBiase
Most Agile: 1981 - Jimmy Snuka
Strongest: 1981 - Tony Atlas
Best Interview: 1981 (tie) - Lou
Albano and Roddy Piper
Most Charismatic: 1980 - Ric Flair;
1981 - Michael Hayes
Most Overrated: 1980 - Mr. Wrestling II;
1981 - Pedro Morales (once more
and the award's named after him)
Most Underrated: 1980 - Great Hossein
Arab (Iron Sheik); 1981 - Buzz Sawyer
Matches of the year: 1980 - Sammartino
vs. Zbyszko Shea Stadium, Backlund
vs. Patera MSG; 1981 - Flair vs.
Rhodes Kansas City, Patterson vs.
Slaughter MSG
Rookie of the year: 1980 - Barry
Windham; 1981 - tie Brad Armstrong
and Brad Rheingans
Biggest shock: 1981 - Tommy Rich
winning NWA World's title
Best Announcer: 1981 - Gordon Solie
Most Disgusting Occurrence: 1981 - The
appearance of a "wrestler" called
The Monster in Los Angeles

BEST HERO OF THE YEAR

1. HULK HOGAN (11).....57
 2. Jimmy Snuka (8).....47
 3. Junkyard Dog (2).....34
 4. Roddy Piper (3).....27
 5. Paul Orndorff (4).....23
 - Tommy Rich (1).....23
- Honorable Mention - Antonio Inoki, Dusty Rhodes, Jerry Lawler, Ricky Steamboat

BEST VILLAIN OF THE YEAR

1. BUZZ SAWYER (6).....53
 2. Ted DiBiase (2).....40
 3. Roddy Piper (7).....37
 4. The Superstar (2).....20
 - Ric Flair (2).....20
- Honorable Mention - Adrian Adonis, Sgt. Slaughter, Terry Funk, Greg Valentine, Buddy Rose, Ken Patera, Don Muraco

FEUD OF THE YEAR

1. DIBIASE vs JY DOG (9).....60
 2. T.Rich vs. Sawyer (6).....47
 3. Piper vs Armstrong (4).....30
 4. Snuka vs Albano (3).....27
 5. Snuka vs Backlund.....17
- Honorable Mention - Inoki vs Rusher Kimura, Terry Funk vs Rhodes

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1. ANDERSON/HANSEN (12).....82
 2. Samoans (6).....38
 3. Gagne/Brunzell (3).....32
 4. Fuji/Saito (2).....28
 5. Gordy/Hayes (5).....27
- Honorable Mention - Shepherders, Inoki & Hogan, Punks

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER

1. JIM LUCCAN (5).....48
2. Bruce Reed (7).....42
3. Don Kernodle (2).....15
4. Buzz Sawyer (1).....14
5. King Kong Bundy.....12

BEST FINISHING MANUEVER

1. SUPER DESTROYER superplex (4).....52
 2. JIMMY SNUKA superfly (6).....49
 3. Tiger Mask leap outside ring (4).....31
 - Buzz Sawyer powerslam (3).....31
 5. Tito Santana bridging leglock (3).....18
- Honorable Mention - Bob Backlund's chicken wing

MOST WASHED UP WRESTLER

1. SUPERSTAR BILLY GRAHAM (7).....40
 2. Gene Kiniski (1).....35
 3. Pedro Morales (2).....24
 4. Dominic DeNucci (3).....18
 5. Ray Stevens (2).....16
- Honorable Mention - Angelo Poffo, Stan Stasiak, Jay Strongbow, Dick the Bruiser

MOST OBNOXIOUS PERSONALITY

1. LOU ALBANO (3).....23
2. Jimmy Valiant (3).....22
3. David Crockett (3).....21
4. Vince McMahon Jr (3).....20
5. Fred Blassie (1).....12
- Gordon Solie (1).....12
- Tommy Rich (1).....12

BEST BRAWLER

1. BRUISER BRODY (13).....81
 2. Stan Hansen (2).....33
 3. Dusty Rhodes (5).....30
 4. Buzz Sawyer (3).....23
 5. Jerry Lawler (2).....17
- Honorable Mention - Dick Murdoch, Terry Funk, Harley Race, Roddy Piper, Abdullah the Butcher

BEST SCIENTIFIC WRESTLER

1. TIGER MASK (5).....38
 2. Steve Wright (6).....30
 - Bob Backlund (3).....30
 4. Dory Funk (5).....26
 5. Ted DiBiase (2).....18
- Honorable Mention - Jim Brunzell, Billy Robinson, Jack Brisco, Mil Mascaras, Les Thornton

MOST AGILE WRESTLER

1. TIGER MASK (24).....129
 2. Jimmy Snuka (7).....67
 3. Dos Caras.....16
 4. Mil Mascaras.....14
 5. Chavo Guerrero (1).....12
- Honorable Mention - Rocky Johnson

STRONGEST WRESTLER

1. KEN PATERA (15).....96
 2. Tony Atlas (7).....64
 3. Hulk Hogan (8).....55
 4. Bruce Reed.....18
 - Andre the Giant (2).....18
- Honorable Mention - Paul Ellering, Jos LeDuc

NOTE: All letters, subscriptions, responding to surveys and get-well cards can be sent to editor Dave Meltzer at 6562 Winterset Way, San Jose, California 95120.

Seriously, he puts out the best and most complete results and news bulletin around. Jay packs each issue with results of more than 200 wrestling cards per month. A results fanatic, or any true wrestling fan can't do without it. Single issues are \$1.50 and Jay's address is 113 Bonvue Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15214.

Mike Rogers and Ken Hamblin put out a very interesting bulletin called Ring Around The World. Many good features in the bi-monthly bulletin which runs about 20 pages. Ken's address is 1220 East 63rd, Tacoma, Washington 98404. The price is \$1.25 plus two 20¢ stamps.

Barbi Barker of 316 North Negley Avenue Apt. 6-D, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15206 puts out the monthly Wrestling Wire. Voted bulletin of the year in '82, the Wire contains results and very good interviews. The bulletin runs in excess of 20 8½ x 7 pages. Cost is \$1.50 per issue.

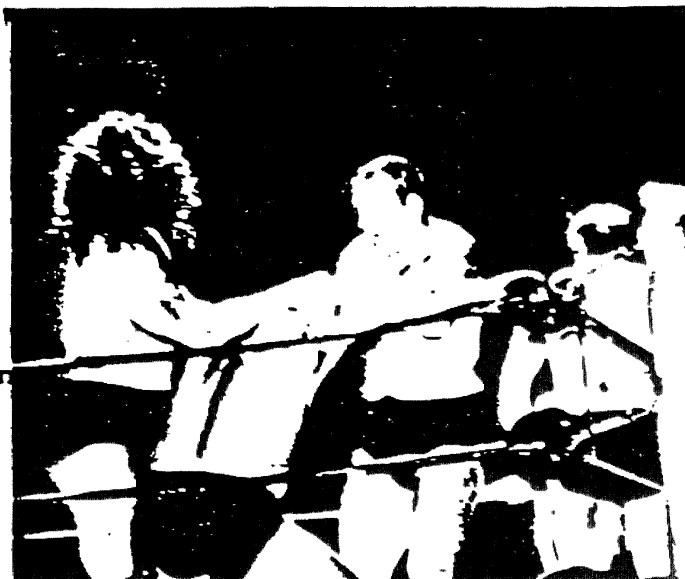
Hard-working Dan Billings of Route 1, Box 227, Millay Road, Bowdoinham, Maine 04008 puts out two bulletins. His bulletin covering Independent wrestling is shockingly complete. He gets news from every "minor" circuit that you've ever heard of, and many others that you haven't. He also puts out Wrestling Writes, which covers the more established promotions. He packs a tremendous amount of info into a 6 page bulletin and I always enjoy them. The Independent Action is around 10 pages. Dan charges 75¢ for Wrestling Writes and \$1 for the Independents.

Ed Garea of 218 Rhode Island Avenue, East Orange, New Jersey 07018 publishes Kiwi Review. The bulletin covers action in New Zealand, England and South Africa. It's \$1.50 per issue.

I will be receiving other bulletins through trades and such over the next few months and will do my best to keep readers informed about them.

"Modest" Mark Nulty, who does an outstanding job on Ringside Live (I'm sorry I didn't vote for him as announcer of the year, but he's not as good a straight man as Gene Okerlund) would like to trade news and VHS tapes. Mark's address is 3905 Skyline, Wichita Falls, Texas 76305.

categories we can rate, and also in trading VHS videotapes with fans from St. Louis, Alabama, Japan and Tennessee.



NOSTALGIA: From January 1980 at San Francisco's Cow Palace. The Punks vs. Gene Kiniski & Bruiser Brody. If S.P. wrestling promoter Leo Nomellini presented matches of this caliber, perhaps his shows would draw 10,000 instead of 3,500. But San Francisco mat fans have to be grateful, at least their area didn't turn out like Los Angeles.



let's look at the year just ended and remember, we'll miss a lot of major activities.

"Pro Wrestling hits the big time," is on the cover of this magazine, and that was almost the story of 1982, but not quite.

There was Hulk Hogan, the 6-foot-5½, 285 pound (this bulletin deals in reality, folks) wrestling superstar who was in the second biggest moneymaking movie of 1982. Many folks, including the star of the movie, Sylvester Stallone, thought the scene with The Hulk was the highlight of the film. The Hulk did wind up being treated like a movie star, but he had to go to Japan for that treatment. He was virtually ignored (aside from an appearance on the Johnny Carson show) by the traditional U.S. media.

There was Jimmy Snuka, a truly phenomenal athlete, who at this writing may be the most popular athlete on the East Coast.

And there was Georgia Championship Wrestling. Unknown to almost everyone, including the millions who watch the show weekly, that was the highest rated sports program in the nation during the summer. It beat out boxing and major league baseball on the networks. It is also the most-watched cable TV show in the United States.

But the only wrestler to get significant attention from the public-at-large was Jerry Lawler. How did he do it? By giving comedienne (the term is used loosely, Lawler is much funnier) Andy Kaufmann a piledriver and putting him in traction.

To the general public, that incident was the biggest thing to hit wrestling. Little do they know.

The Lawler-Kaufmann incident, and another incident between the two on the David Letterman show brought out the major question. Was what happened legit? Since we all know about wrestling (so the public thinks), how can anything involving a wrestler not be "rehearsed." The faultiness of that logic is obvious. But the question itself remains.

Kaufmann really suffered a neck injury. The hospital reports proved that. Whether it was the result of a piledriver can be doubted. But what person, with a neck injury bad enough to be put in traction, would risk going into the ring for a "cherade" piledriver? Especially one who

was back in its original owners hands just a few weeks later.

Otto Wanz, a relative unknown to most fans, shocked Nick Bockwinkel on August 29th in St. Paul, Minnesota, to win the A.W.A. belt. The remarkably well-preserved Bockwinkel came back and regained the belt on October 9th in Chicago, due to help from manager Bobby Heenan.

Bob Backlund, the "popular" W.W.F. champ staved off challenges from some first-rate stars like Greg Valentine, Don Muraco, Adrian Adonis, Bob Orton and Snuka. Towards year-end, Backlund began being the recipient of boos at many major arenas, including an amazing night in Philadelphia when 80 percent of the crowd pulled for hated Lou Albano's protege, Snuka against him.

The reason for Bob's beginning to fall from the fans' graces are that he's a good, but very colorless wrestler. He doesn't have the ability to make a match exciting, which means if he doesn't have a good foe, the match is a dud. This was proven against people like Jesse Ventura, Blackjack Mulligan, Superstar Billy Graham and will be proven early in '83 against John Studd once again.

Bruno Sammartino was a great champion, and he lasted eight years on top the first time. Bob doesn't have Bruno's charisma, and five years on top is much too long. You can say a smart promoter would notice that, but look at the crowds the W.W.F. draws. They're the best in the country. Yes, it's a paradox if there ever was one.

By the year's end it was Snuka, not Backlund who was responsible for the big crowds. Snuka himself was a paradox, the villain managed by hated Lou Albano, who was actually cheered by a good percentage of fans. Let's give McMahon credit for discovering the obvious here, and having Snuka turn into a hero after a violent break-up with Albano.

The best wrestling to be found in '82 happened in the land of the Rising Sun. As they've done with automobiles, the Japanese have taken something American and brought it to levels unreachable by the Americans.

The biggest break-through on the other side of the world was the discovery of a true wrestling sensation. A man who in a basically U.S. poll, who had wrestled perhaps a dozen bouts in this country in '82, won three categories in this magazine's poll--the most of any wrestler. For more info on Tiger Mask, see the superstar profiles.

REVIEW CONTINUES ON PAGE EIGHT

managed to retain his position as perhaps the most well-respected champion in many years.

Flair's match with Kerry von Erich set up a tournament to recognize legitimate World's tag team champs. The tournament started big, with spectacular tournaments in Greensboro, Charlotte, Richmond, Atlanta and St. Petersburg. Word was constantly given--literally for months--on how the tournament was doing.

Flair and his current top contender, former champ Harley Race, were responsible for a record crowd in St. Louis--breaking the record Ric had just set a few months earlier against Dusty Rhodes. And on and on it goes.

Atlanta, where cable's most popular program originates from, was a hotbed of action throughout the year. The unique character of Roddy Piper became the most talked about wrestler early in the year with his antics as Gordon Solie's co-commentator on the TV program. Piper's excitable nature and quick wit made him one of the best villain's in recent memory. Only reality put a stop to that.

After a match in the Carolinas, Piper was stabbed by a psychotic wrestling fan. It was amazing. For the millions of extra viewers his antics got for wrestling--for all the controversy he caused, the only time his name was mentioned by the media was--when he was stabbed.

It may not have been a coincidence when a few weeks later, Piper saved Gordon Solie from an attack by Don Muraco, and was transferred into a baby-face.

The Georgia promotion, which deserves credit because Atlanta's Omni cards had more quality wrestlers than any other city in the world--also deserves some blame for failing to keep Muraco happy and killing what may have been the year's best feud, before it ever started. By the end of the year, Piper was fired just before he was about to feud with his leading rival as the sport's star stand-up-comic, Jerry Lawler.

Piper found refuge in the Carolinas, which at this writing probably have the best wrestling to be found anywhere.

in the Carolinas. Jim Crockett Jr., the N.W.A. president (who left office in September) attempted to set up a tournament to recognize legitimate World's tag team champs. The tournament started big, with spectacular tournaments in Greensboro, Charlotte, Richmond, Atlanta and St. Petersburg. Word was constantly given--literally for months--on how the tournament was doing.

Then the word got out. Wahoo McDaniel & Don Muraco were the winners of a mythical western tournament held "in the islands." The eastern tournament didn't include previous tournament winners, but Ole Anderson & Stan Hansen, which had been the dominant team in the non-fiction aspect of the tourney, wound up winning the eastern tourney. Muraco of course turned villain before the scheduled best-of-seven finals.

Anderson & Hansen wound up with the belts. Unfortunately Hansen's commitments in Japan, where he was named the MVP for 1982 on the foreign side, made it impossible for he & Anderson to keep up any schedule of defenses. The "universally recognized" belts, vanished into oblivion. They resurfaced a few months later in the hands of Sgt. Slaughter and a much-improved Don Kernodle, who won a fictitious tournament in Japan.

Many people felt the best wrestling in this country was held in Houston, Texas. The fans in Houston saw all the stars of the San Antonio-based Southwest Championship Wrestling, and the Louisiana-based Mid-South group. Promoter Paul Boesch drew record crowds when he matched Bockwinkel with the popular and charismatic Junkyard Dog. Boesch also signed Bockwinkel in interesting defenses of his crown against Tommy Rich, Bruiser Brody, Lawler and Dick Slater during '82.

The Mid-South, home of perhaps this country's best television show, was dominated by the never ending feud between Ted DiBiase and the Junkyard Dog. Mid-South also deserves credit for boosting the much-improved Jim Duggan into stardom, and recognizing the potential of people like Matt Borne and Mr. Olympia (Jerry Stubbs).

(CONCLUSION ON PAGE 9)

1981 and the USA network were getting tremendous exposure. San Antonio's Southwest promotion recently scored a coup getting a weekly Sunday morning slot on the USA network. The Dallas TV station which broadcasts World Class Wrestling, is being seen on cable throughout Texas and Oklahoma. The ramifications, both good and bad, of this will be discussed in detail in the next issue.

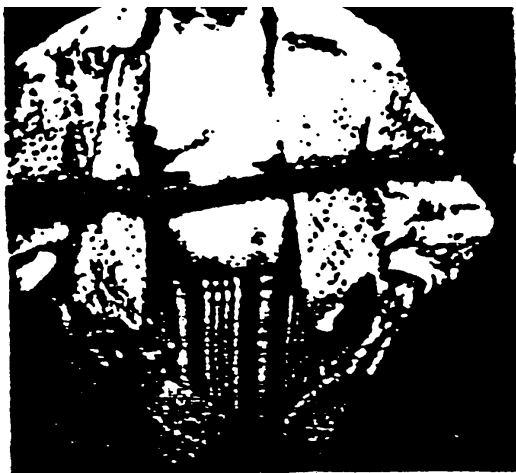
1982 also saw the retirement of the man the Japanese called, Mr. Wrestling--Sam Muchnick, the long-time super promoter in St. Louis. Another retiree was Fritz von Erich, whose final bout drew a disappointing crowd of less than 7,000 to an outdoor stadium in Texas.

Refusing to come out of retirement in '82 was the legendary Bruno Sammartino. Sammartino attempted to promote opposite Vince McMahon on the East Coast with little success. The only chance of success would have been for Bruno to don the tights, which never happened. Sammartino's International Wrestling folded just as the year came to a close.

Bruno, who is roughly the same age as AWA champ Bockwinkel, washed-up veteran villain Ray Stevens, and younger than Dick the Bruiser, is the exception to wrestling's cardinal rule. That is, no wrestler ever really retires and sticks with it.

Coming out of retirement for a few appearances in '82 were the greatest scientific wrestler of all-time Karl Gotch; Lou Thesz (who never really has retired completely, despite being 72 years old), Verne Gagne and "Nature Boy" Buddy Rogers. Gagne and Mad Dog Vachon drew 18,000 fans to the St. Paul Civic Center to see them battle Jerry Blackwell & Sheik Adnan El Kaissey. Rogers donned the trunks on Thanksgiving in Philadelphia teaming with Superfly Snuka against Lou Albano and Stevens.

In the bad news department, former California wrestling great Peter Maivia died in June at the age of 49. Another local name, Bearcat Wright, died in August.



SORRY PAT, NO VOTES FOR
ANNOUNCER OF THE YEAR

DOESN'T HE LOOK LIKE

Matt Borne and Jim Garvin
Playboy Buddy Rose and Larry Sharpe
Terry Funk and Bob Orton Jr.
David von Erich and Bill Walton
Pat Kelly and Mike Kelly (sorry)
Adrian Adonis and Mike Rotundo
Lou Albano and Louie DePalma on
Taxi (similar personality)
Abdullah the Butcher and the various
Abdullah clones (Abdullah the
Great, Kareem Mohammad, etc.)
Gino Hernandez and Eric Estrada
El Gran Apollo and Tito Santana
Superstar and Super Destroyer
(yesiree, I've never been able
to tell them apart - just kidding)



and for the match of the year.

Being World champion in pro wrestling, through the schedule alone, is one of the toughest jobs in sports. You can see it on Flair's face, not only in the scars, but how he's aged five years over the 12 months.

But during that period there hasn't even been one night that he hasn't given the fans their monies worth.

The list of men who have fallen before him in '82, going right down the ratings from Snuka, DiBiase, Race, Piper, Rhodes, Brisco, Slaughter, Steamboat, Tsuruta, Patera, Sawyer, Reed, Slater---you get the picture--doesn't begin to tell you the story.

How about Christmas night, barely escaping a bloody cage match with Kerry von Erich in Dallas. The next afternoon it's off to West Virginia and a match with Tommy Rich. Later that night it's Columbus, Ohio and Paul Orndorff. Then we're down to Florida and a match with Barry Windham. It never ends.

The fans in the various cities don't care that he's been traveling all day to make the match. And they never have to think about it either.

Because day-in-and-day-out Ric Flair puts on a spectacular show. It's not the anti-gravity act of a Tiger Mask, or the awesome brawling act of Bruiser Brody. It's wrestling, brawling, flying, everything, all executed by the best showmen, the best wrestler, one of the best on interviews--the wrestler of the year.

****THE YEAR OF THE TIGER****

Satoro Sayama should have known he was much too small to be a pro wrestler. At 5-foot-7 and 170 pounds (giving him the benefit of the doubt), how can one make it in a sport designed for super-giants.

Sayama was spending too much time studying different forms of fighting. From the classic catch-as-catch-can wrestling, to kick karate fighting, judo, kung fu, added to the grace of a ballet dancer and the balance of a world-class gymnast and you have the hottest new star in pro wrestling.

hardest worker, won the very important most impressive category, and placed fourth in wrestler of the year--in less than a dozen U.S. appearances.

Tiger Mask won the WWF jr. heavyweight title on January 1, 1982 in Tokyo by pinning Dynamite Kid in the final match of a tournament caused when the champ, Tatsumi Fujinami, decided to compete in the heavyweight division. He went through '82 undefeated, including matches with men who outweighed him by as much as 70 pounds. The only thing that stopped Tiger Mask in '82 was knee surgery in April, which caused him to vacate the title.

When he came back to work in May, he, on consecutive nights, defeated Les Thornton to win the N.W.A. World jr. heavyweight title, and then pinned the Black Tiger (England's Mark Rocco) to win back the WWF belt.

The Tiger became the first wrestler besides Antonio Inoki and Giant Baba to be named Japan's MVP in more than a dozen years.

For those who haven't had the privilege of watching Tiger Mask wrestle in Japan, describing the moves doesn't do the man justice.

In one year, he's made the junior heavyweight division almost as important as the heavyweight division in Japan. He may revolutionize pro wrestling in the U.S. in '83. And nobody who is 170 pounds would be too small for wrestling.

****FEUD OF THE YEAR****

For the beginning of '82, Ted DiBiase was considered perhaps the best scientific wrestler and among the most popular wrestlers in the world. That all ended on June 23rd.

A weird set of circumstances led up to June 23rd. DiBiase was North American champion, and lost the title in March to Bob Roop, due to outside interference of the One Man Gang. DiBiase left for Japan and on his return, immediately challenged Roop to get the belt back.

The match was finally signed, with DiBiase agreeing to leave Mid-South if he failed to win the title in a no disqualification match. Two days before the match was to take place, Roop was pinned and lost the title to the Junkyard Dog, Ted's frequent tag team partner.

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By abandoning his successful scientific style, inside the ring DiBiase is not quite as impressive. But he's made himself into a first-rate villain, certainly among the best to be found anywhere. He and the Dog continued to go at each other.

One tag match saw DiBiase & Jim Duggan win the tag belts from the Dog & Mr. Olympia, when guest ref Mr. Wrestling II counted fast. Only it wasn't Wrestling II, but The Grappler disguised as Wrestling II. The belts were returned to Dog & Olympia, but not for long.

DiBiase & Duggan were set to get a loser leaves town, no disq. title match with Dog & Olympia. Strangely Duggan was nowhere to be found, and DiBiase was forced to fly in Matt Borne. DiBiase & Borne won the belts, as Ted pinned the Dog when Duggan suddenly showed up and helped in the effort.

But this feud still hasn't been settled. The Dog is still around the Mid-South, wrestling as Stagger Lee, under the mask, and trying to get at DiBiase every opportunity possible.

****THE MOUTH OF THE SOUTH****

One Saturday afternoon in November of '81, Roddy Piper showed up in the Georgia wrestling studio to be Gordon Solie co-commentator. In his second or third week on the air, he did a most interesting interview with Bob & Brad Armstrong.

Slowly but surely, week-after-week, the feud was marvelously conceived. By the time it got going Piper was the most hated man in wrestling.

Piper outlasted feuds with Bob Armstrong, Tommy Rich and Jack Brisco as a villain. He developed a unique interview style, blending in bits of stand-up comedy with uncontrolled rage.

Rowdy Roddy holds the unique distinction of finishing 4th as the best hero of '82, and 3rd as the best villain. He placed 2nd for wrestler of the year, 3rd as most charismatic and, by a wide margin, 1st as the number one man on the interview stage.

Piper was stabbed in early August by a crazy fan, and immediately switched to the good guy side of the fence. Whether the two events were coincidental is debatable

of '82. He developed a feud with former tag partner, the veteran nasty Ole Anderson. Currently in the Carolinas, Piper is hot on the trail of Ric Flair himself in matches which the build-up should be almost as much fun as the event.

He always comes to Oregon on occasion as the returning hero to battle the likes of Buddy Rose.

It's hard for those of us who remember Piper as the young joke of a wrestler in Los Angeles to believe he's gotten this far. But no doubt about it, he's truly one of the biggest names in the business, and deservedly so.

****THERE'S A NEW DOG IN TOWN****

I'll never forget the first time I saw Buzz Sawyer wrestle. It was about a year-and-a-half ago when he was a villain in Florida.

He threw one of the most amazing drop kicks I've ever seen, showed more agility and intenseness than anyone else in town, and topped it all off with a Jimmy Snuka-like dive off the top ropes. No doubt about it, this guy was going to become a superstar.

I hit the nail right squarely on the head this time. Sawyer showed up in Georgia, even was a hero for two weeks until he broke up his tag team with Ray Candy.

He was mostly a preliminary villain in early '82, unsure of himself on interviews, but with tremendous ability. His powerslam has to be seen to be believed, it's by far the best in wrestling.

While in Georgia, his stock started rising. First he feuded with Jim Garvin, then with Kevin Sullivan, and finally a sensational feud with Tommy Rich in which they fought in the streets, in the dressing rooms and the studio on a regular basis.

He's no longer Buzz Sawyer, it's now a bald-headed (thanks to losing inside a cage to Bruce Reed on Christmas) Mad Dog Sawyer--wrestling's leading villain of 1982.

He appears uncontrollable, bordering on psychotic. But in wrestling that's good because he has unmatched intensity in the ring, incredible determination, and one can see that he really does eat, sleep and breathe wrestling.

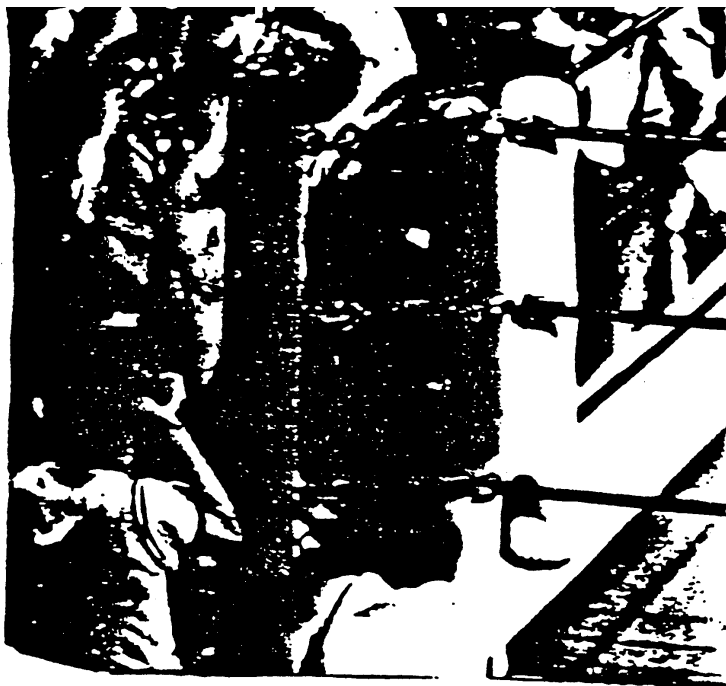
If he can avoid destroying his mind and body because of his reckless abandon, a World championship could be in the stars two years down the road.

almost a perfect villain, at least on visual appearance.

He's about 6-foot-5, 250 well-conditioned pounds or better, and virtually indestructable. In '82 Brody faced superstars from Key West, Florida to Tokyo, Japan, and had almost an unblemished record.

In Japan, he downed Dory Funk on April 21st to win that country's most prestigious title, the International heavyweight. He has since made title defenses against names like the Funks, Jimmy Snuka, Harley Race, Dick Slater, and Jumbo Tsuruta.

1983 may be the biggest year yet for the awesome, chain-swinging animal from El Paso, Texas. Remember the date of February 10th at the Checkerdome in St. Louis. It's Brody and Ric Flair--the match of the year may come early this time.



THIS ISN'T TRICK PHOTOGRAPHY. It's Tiger Mask and the Dynamite Kid, Tom Billington in their August 5th Tokyo match. This is just one of the reasons it was co-winner as match of the year.



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